

Comparing Paul's Commission with the Twelve's – Part 3

Introduction:

1. When a person refers to "the great commission" they are inferring that there is one commission from our Lord that stands above all the rest.
2. What does the word "commission" mean? Webster's defines it this way:
 - An authorization or command to act in a prescribed manner or to perform prescribed acts.
 - Authority to act for, in behalf of, or in place of another; a task or matter entrusted to one as an agent for another.
3. It is interesting that the word "commission" is only used one time in God's Word.
 - In **Acts 26:12** Paul had authority and **commission** from the chief priests to go to Damascus and arrest believers in Christ.
 - A commission has to do with the authority to act on behalf of another. The one who grants the authority has the power to detail what he wants the other person to do and where they are to do it.
4. Nowhere in the Bible does God label a set of instructions as "the **great** commission." Mankind has sought to label certain passages of Scripture this way, but God never does.
5. As we study, we find that God's Word is a **series** of "great commissions."
 - John the Baptist received a great commission. **Luke 3:2-4; John 1:23, 33**
 - The twelve received a great commission in **Matthew 10:5-14**.
 - This one differed from the great commissions they received after Christ's resurrection. **Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8**
6. Many Bible teachers assume that Christ's words to the eleven after His resurrection and before His ascension were the final commissions He gave until now.
7. This is grossly incorrect and unscriptural. These were not Christ's **last** words. As we learned last week, Christ spoke, yet again (this time from heaven), and gave a great commission to a different person, the apostle Paul.
8. Was Paul's commission simply a reiteration of the commissions that Christ gave to the twelve? Is Paul's commission identical to the twelve's?
9. When one takes the time to truly examine the words of these commissions, they will find that they differ in many ways. Let's explore these commissions and seek to rightly divide the differences.

The Twelve

Begin at Jerusalem

Paul

Leave Jerusalem

1. When Christ commissioned the twelve, God made it very clear where they were to begin their work, Jerusalem. **Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8**
2. This was not a suggestion, but rather a command. It was one the twelve took very seriously and literally, despite great danger. **Acts 8:1**
3. Today, preachers allegorize this clear command by saying that these passages teach that we should always evangelize our hometown first. This is **not** the teaching or intended purpose of these Scriptures. Jerusalem was not their hometown. They were men of Galilee. **Acts 1:11**

4. How does this compare with Paul's commission? When Paul went to Jerusalem, Christ told him to get out quickly. **Acts 22:18, 21**
5. So clearly there were geographic differences in these commissions.

The Twelve

Received their commission on earth

Paul

Received his commission from heaven

1. It is only logical the twelve would receive their commission on earth. They had been taught by Christ during His **earthly** ministry for three years. His parting words were spoken to them before He ascended from earth to heaven.
2. They were given the promise that as Christ left the earth and went to heaven, He would one day return from the heavens to the earth. **Acts 1:9-11**
3. This of course was a confirmation to them that Christ would, in fact, return and set up an **earthly** kingdom for Israel as promised. **Matthew 18:27-28, 6:10**
4. Paul received His commission from Christ in the heavens (**Acts 9:3**). Paul called his commission "*the heavenly vision*" (**Acts 26:19**).
5. Paul's commission involved making known a new heavenly organism called the body of Christ, whose blessings are not earthly, but heavenly. **Ephesians 1:3, 2:6-7**

The Twelve

Go to Gentiles only after witnessing throughout the land of Israel

Paul

Go directly to the Gentiles

1. Christ made it very clear to the twelve that their message must go the land area of Israel first. God even specified the order in which they were to preach to Israel: Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. **Acts 1:8**
2. They would eventually get to the Gentiles with their message, but not until the land area of Israel received it first. **Matthew 28:19** must be viewed in light of **Matthew 10:23, Luke 24:47, and Acts 1:8**.
3. What about Paul's commission? As we already saw, Paul began his ministry by going into Arabia and then Damascus (**Galatians 1:17**) and when he went to Jerusalem, Christ told him to **leave** Jerusalem. Paul was only there 15 days. **Galatians 1:18**
4. Paul then went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia (modern Turkey). Paul said he was unknown by face to those in Judea. **Galatians 1:21-22**
5. Paul's first recorded ministry was not in Israel at all, but in Antioch of Syria (**Acts 11:25**). All of his missionary journeys were to Gentile countries.
6. Paul certainly had a passion to see his people (Israel) receive his gospel (**Romans 10:1**), but Christ made it very clear that the focus of Paul's commission was not the conversion of Israel, but rather to reach Gentiles with the gospel of Christ. **Acts 22:21, 26:17-18**
7. The focus of Paul's commission was clearly different than the twelve's. The twelve recognized this distinction. **Galatians 2:9**

The Twelve

Preach the gospel of the kingdom
and the gospel of God

Paul

Preach the gospel of Christ
and the gospel of grace

1. Paul received a gospel by direct revelation of Jesus Christ from heaven.
Galatians 1:11-12
 - This revelation had previously been kept a secret. It was a mystery.
Ephesians 3:1-9
 - This is why Paul refers to it as "*my gospel.*" **Romans 2:16, 16:25; 2 Timothy 2:8**
 - Paul said he had to go to Jerusalem and communicate to the twelve "*that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles.*" **Galatians 2:2**
2. Paul calls this gospel "*the gospel of Christ.*" This is a phrase that is unique to Paul.
Romans 1:16; Galatians 1:7; 1 Corinthians 9:17-18
 - This gospel simply proclaims that a Gentile can be saved by faith alone in the finished work of Jesus Christ. **Romans 3:21-22**
3. Paul also refers to his message as the gospel of the grace of God. **Acts 20:24**
 - This simply states that Jew or Gentile alike can be saved and completely forgiven of all sins by simple faith in the gospel of Christ, and are placed by God's Spirit into one body - the body of Christ. **Ephesians 3:6-8**
4. When Christ commissioned the twelve in **Matthew 28:18-20** and told them to go and teach all nations, what gospel were they to proclaim? It could not have been Paul's gospel because it hadn't been revealed yet.
 - **Matthew 24:14** identifies it as "*the gospel of the kingdom.*"
 - In context, this was the good news that Christ is returning to earth and will establish a literal, physical, visible kingdom on earth.
5. They were instructed to pray for this (**Matthew 6:10**), and to proclaim this message.
Matthew 24:27-30, 25:31
6. This is exactly what the twelve did in the early part of the book of Acts. They told Israel that they had crucified their Messiah, but that He had risen, and they should repent and prepare themselves for His return to earth. **Acts 3:19-21**
7. We must understand that both Paul and the twelve preached the gospel of God (**Romans 1:1-4**). Christ died, was buried, but rose again. But what did they teach that should be the response to this good news?
 - The twelve told Israel to repent and be water baptized; they would then receive the Holy Spirit, and remission of sins at Christ's Second Coming.
 - Paul said to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. **Acts 16:31**

The Twelve

Teach the commandments Christ
gave them while on earth

Paul

Teach truth revealed by
Christ from heaven

1. What did Christ commission the twelve to teach? They were to teach people to observe the commandments that Christ had given them. **Matthew 28:20**

2. This would include the commandments of the law (**Matthew 5:17-19**), as well as other righteous commands that Christ gave them in view of His coming kingdom to earth. For an example, read **Matthew 5:39-44, 6:19-34, and Luke 12:32-34**.
3. Many preachers teach from these passages devotionally, but Christ meant them literally (**Matthew 7:24-27**), and the twelve took them literally.
Acts 2:44-45, 4:33-35, 5:41
4. What about Paul's commission? Was he simply to teach truth that had already been revealed to the twelve as part of their commission?
5. When Paul was converted, Christ made it clear that Paul was to preach according to what Christ had shown him from heaven and the special revelations that Christ would give him in the future. **Acts 26:16**
6. This is why Paul says that he did not confer with flesh and blood after his salvation (**Galatians 1:16**). Christ would give to Paul special revelation that had previously been kept secret. **Colossians 1:25-26**
7. The twelve were to proclaim Christ's words that He spoke to Israel while on earth. Paul was to teach Christ's words that He spoke to the body of Christ from heaven.

The Twelve

Water baptism was a crucial part of their commission and message

Paul

The emphasis is on Spirit baptism, not water baptism

1. Water baptism was a crucial part of the message that Christ commissioned the twelve to proclaim. **Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38**
2. No person would enter the kingdom on earth unless they had believed the twelve's message and identified with this message through water baptism.
3. This was part of Israel's prophetic program. Israel had polluted themselves among the nations of the earth and this baptism with water spoke of Israel's need for divine cleansing. **Ezekiel 36:16-29 (notice especially vs. 25)**
4. But water baptism is never mentioned in Christ's commission to Paul (**Acts 26:16-18**). In fact, Paul said that "*Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.*" **1 Corinthians 1:17**
 - The twelve could have never made a statement like that. Paul obviously didn't think he was operating under the same commission as the twelve.
 - Water baptism is never mentioned once on Paul's first missionary journey.
5. Paul did baptize a few people during the transitional period of Acts, but we do not see him baptizing anybody after his statement in 1 Corinthians, nor does he mention it in any of his epistles he wrote after the book of Acts.
6. Paul revealed that every person that believes on Christ is immediately baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ. **1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:26-27; Ephesians 4:4-6**

In Conclusion:

1. You may ask, "Why are Christ's commissions to the twelve and to Paul so different?"

2. It is very simple. With the rejection of the twelve's message by Israel, God would now usher in a time period that had been kept secret - a time of grace unrevealed previously.
3. The unfolding of this mystery and its truths would require a new apostle, with a new message, and a new commission.
4. The commission to the twelve has simply been interrupted, but will continue in the future after the body of Christ has been taken up to heaven.

GOD'S PROPHETIC PROGRAM

